

CRY OF DAWN

VOLUME ONE

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FOR MATURE
READERS



INTRODUCTION by
**STEPHEN R.
BISSETTE**

LINSNER
© 1989

INTRODUCTION

- by -

STEPHEN R. BISSETTE

"Poetic, like religion, myth, has every right to concern itself with the pounding of blood and the rumbling of thunder, with indelicate sensations indelicately rendered; its finesse lies in the grafting on such libidinous roots of the more delicate stems of feeling."

Even gorehounds have hearts.

I know, because I am one myself. As is Joe Linsner. Joe is the latest in a generation of *very* graphic artists --including Vincent Locke (**Deadworld**) and Tim Vigil (**Faust**)-- who are gorehounds. Unapologetic gorehounds.

A 'gorehound', for those of you who don't know, is a person who enjoys violent melodrama, as a release, as a 'fix', as a rousing form of entertainment and, yes, for some, enlightenment. In this day and age, it usually applies to apparently rabid fans of horror media. The basest (and, sadly, accurate about 48% of the time) species of gorehound is the Freddy/Michael/Jason/Leatherface fixated teenage mediababy who indiscriminately reads **Fangoria**, **Faust**, and paperback horrors, devours splatter videos, and dresses up like his/her demented 'hero' for conventions and Halloween. This caricature is definitely a disturbing one for most people, and takes many unsettling extremes; from the crass merchandising of these imaginary mindless, cannibalistic pedophiles (have you seen the "Freddy/Jason and Victim" squirtballs in the department store toy racks? *Who* are these ridiculous and repellent toys meant for?), to the Jason-fixated teenage gorehound from Groenfield, Massachusetts who killed a female classmate with a knife before hanging himself in the woods. The abyss that lies between such cynical exploitation and all-too-real human tragedy is dizzying and dark...very dark.

And somewhere in that darkness is the genuine article: horror fiction that is real, human, of substance --that explores rather than exploits, and is therefore of value. By looking into those shadows with unflinching clarity of vision, confronting our nightmares and fears, we may indeed find enlightenment of a kind.

It would be impossible to plummet those depths --that pitchblack darkness-- within the confines of this short introduction. But keep it in mind, dear reader, and its lesson: this material can be dangerous. It can, and sometimes does, bite.

As storytellers and gorehounds, we count on it.

Nor is it this introduction's job to make the journey into that night; Joe Linsner has done it in the following stories. This is the nightwalk, in Joe's footsteps, left in the ink and tones on white paper as a map to the darker corners he chose to explore.

Cry For Dawn is Joe's debut, and its clarity, intensity, and attention to detail --as a storyteller and visual artist-- is bracing; it is as ambitious as Berni Wrightson's own debut anthology, **Bad Time Stories**, in the early 1970's. Like **Bad Time Stories**, **Cry For Dawn** is also a potent, personal statement of the times: Berni summed up the best of the '60's quality horror comics and pointed the way for the '70's, while Joe arguably provides such an individual axis for the '80's looking into the 1990's. Whether Joe will stand the test of time as well as Berni, who knows? But he has definitely put his best blood-spattered foot forward.

Joe also has heart. Graphic as those tales often are, they are seldom gratuitous, exploring as they do the darker extremes of love, family, and pubescent rites-of-passage. Of course, 'gratuitous' is a personal call, especially in a genre that revels in excessive reminder of our mortality, where gory style is too often a substitute for any substance. There is a *heart* that drives **Cry For Dawn's** grand guignol that is refreshing in the reptilian shadow of the *de rigueur* cold-blooded violence typical of the current pack of 'mature' comics.

Joe's work *does* have heart, emotionally and viscerally, and therein lies the bedrock for his stories and, one hopes, his future growth. "The more delicate stems of feeling" are at work here, though no punches are pulled, and for my money this sets Joe apart from the rest of the pack. He is as facile as his most accomplished 'gorehound' peers, but I find my mind and heart engaged as well.

And as I said, even gorehounds have hearts.

I've got one myself. It's in a jar, over here...

— S.R. Bissette

(with apologies to Robert Bloch)

CRY FOR DAWN

VOLUME ONE

CONTENTS

RAINSTORMS & MANIACS 2

by MICHAEL PATRICKS

TOKENS 10

by JOSEPH M. MONKS

PAINT IT BLACK 18

ESQUE 19

BRING ME A DREAM 20

by JOSEPH MICHAEL LINSNER

KIDS MEAL 29

by MONKS & LINSNER

A WORD FROM the AUTHOR 39

...and the ARTISTE 40



All Stories Illustrated By

JOSEPH MICHAEL LINSNER

"HORROR HAS A FACE, AND YOU MUST MAKE A FRIEND OF HORROR—HORROR AND MORAL TERROR ARE YOUR FRIENDS, IF THEY ARE NOT, THEN THEY ARE ENEMIES TO BE FEARED..."

—KURTZ
APOCALYPSE NOW

FEAR, IT WELLS UP LIKE BLOOD THRU A FRESH RAZOR SLIT IN WARM FLESH — IT RISES UP OUT OF THE DARKNESS, A CHILD'S SHRIEK IN THE NIGHT, A LOVER'S HAUNTED DREAMS, THE BOOGEYMAN IN THE CLOSET, MONSTERS LOCKED AWAY FROM PLAIN SIGHT. IT IS THE THIN LINE BETWEEN SANITY AND MADNESS, A BLACK FOLD IN THE SOUL...

FEAR — THE DIVINE, THE DEMONIC. IT CAN CORRUPT THE INNOCENT, SHATTER THE WEAK, HUMBLE THE BRAVE... AND IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT, IT CAN MAKE ALL

—CRY FOR DAWN—



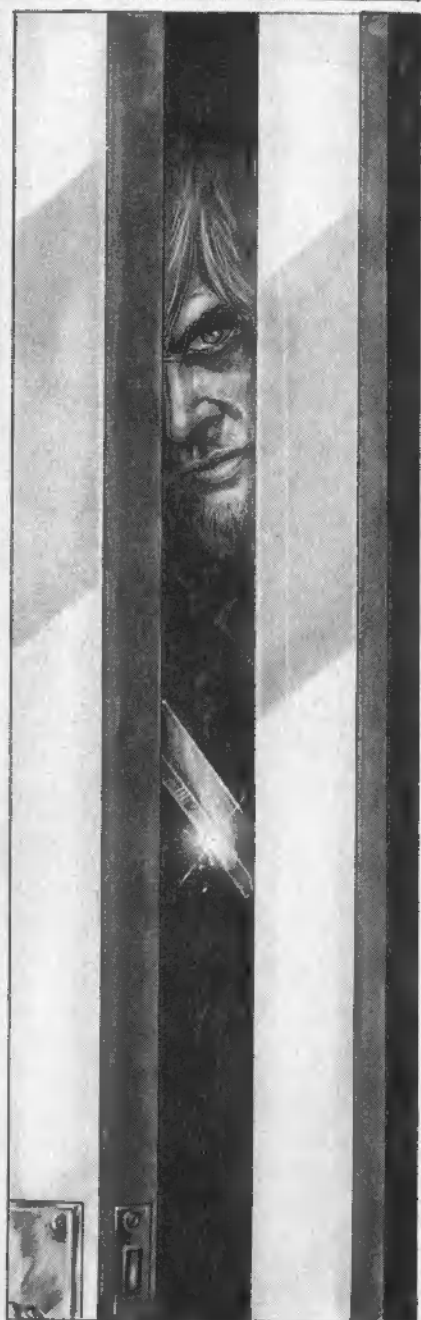
IT IS A NIGHT OF FIRSTS FOR BILLY. HIS NEW BED IS AN ADULTS BED, NOT A DINOSAUR OR RACING CAR, BUT A REAL LIFE ADULT'S BED. FOR THE FIRST TIME HIS PARENTS HAD GONE OUT WITHOUT HIRING A SITTER, LEAVING BILLY AND HIS OLDER SISTER KAREN HOME ALONE.

BUT TONIGHT, BILLY HAS TO GRAPPLE WITH SOMETHING EVEN MORE FRIGHTENING THAN BEING HOME ALONE. THE SPRINGS FIRST THUNDERSTORM HAS ARRIVED, AND FOR THIS 11 YEAR OLD BOY, FOR THE FIRST TIME, MOM ISN'T THERE TO ANSWER HIS CRIES...

RAINSTORMS AND MANIACS

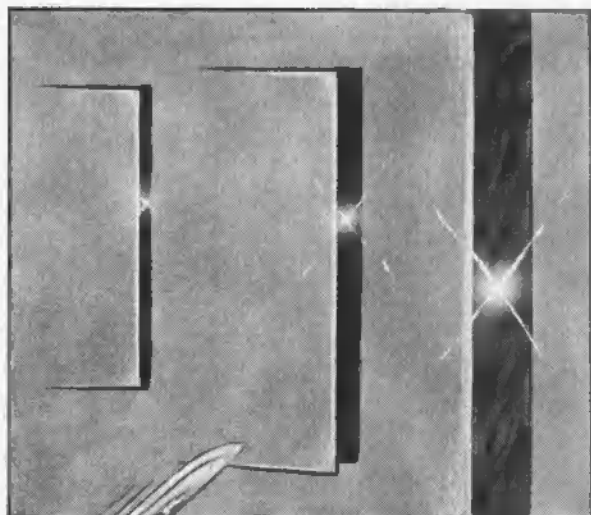


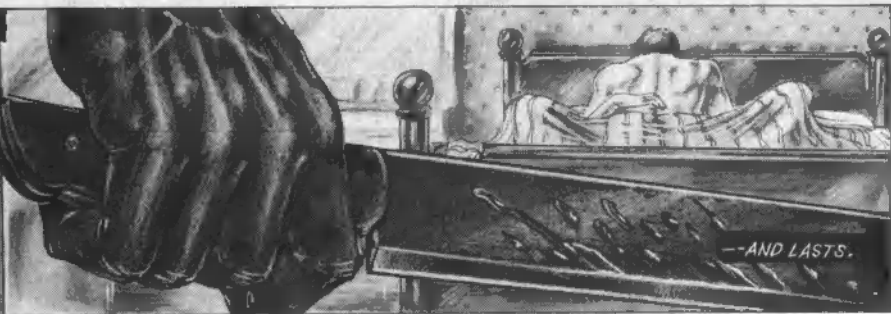
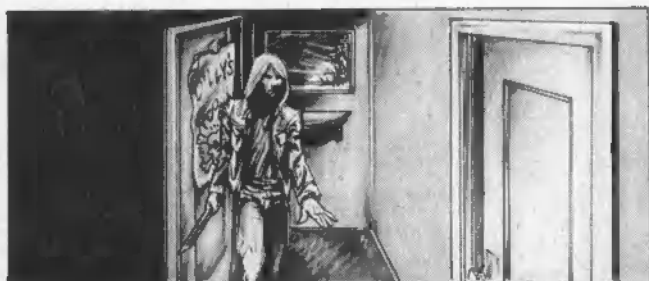
FOR BILLY, THERE IS NOTHING BUT THE RAINSTORM, A WAKING NIGHTMARE—THE VIOLENCE OF THE THUNDER AND LIGHTNING THE TRIGGERS OF HIS FEAR... KAREN, HE COULD CALL KAREN—

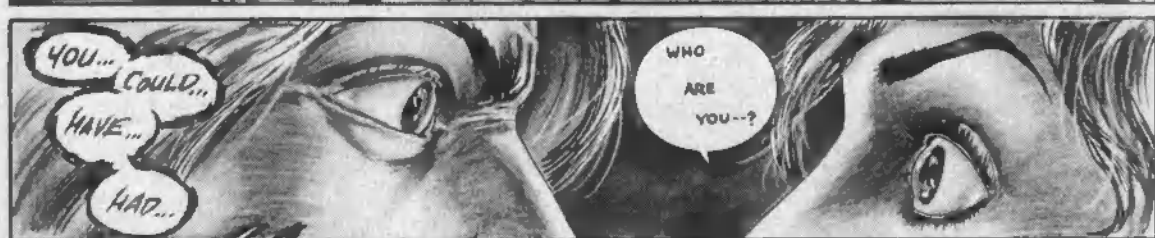




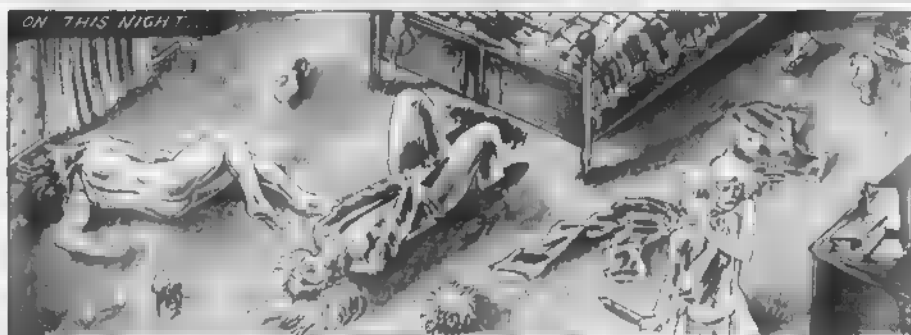
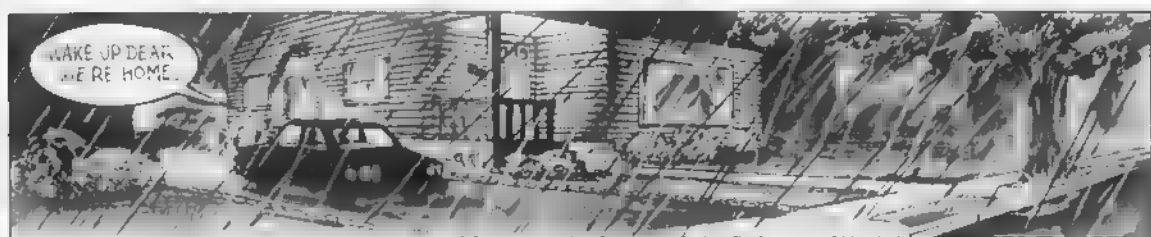
FOR HER, IT IS ALSO A NIGHT OF FIRSTS.











THERE ARE NO MORE THREATS...



NO MORE INTRUDERS ...



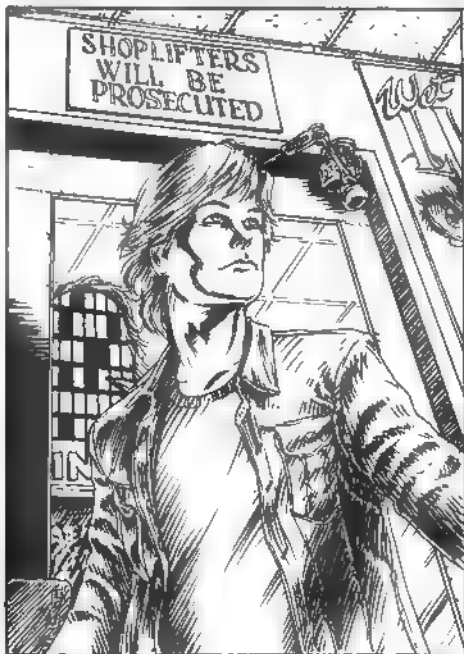
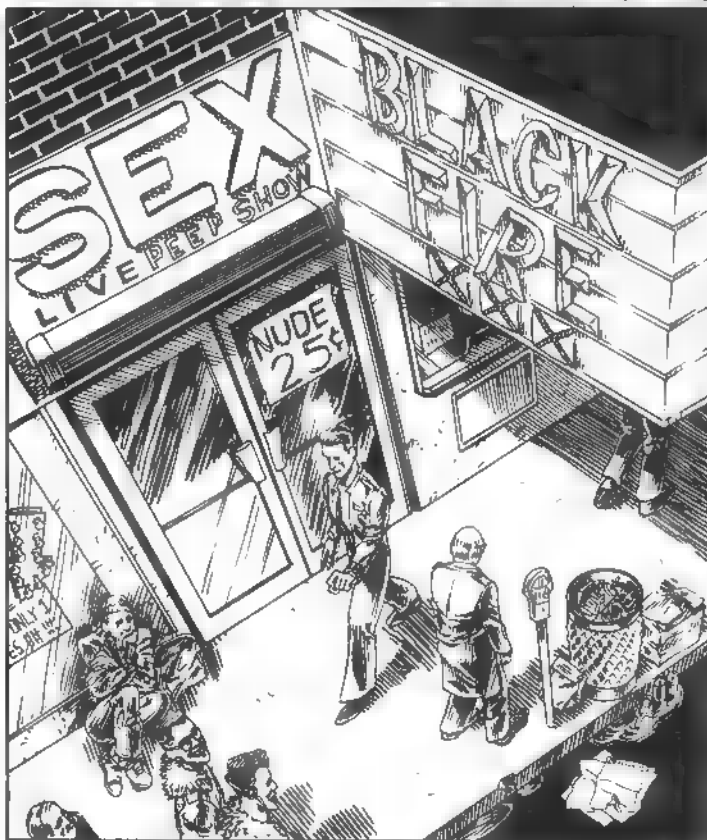
NO MORE FEARS...

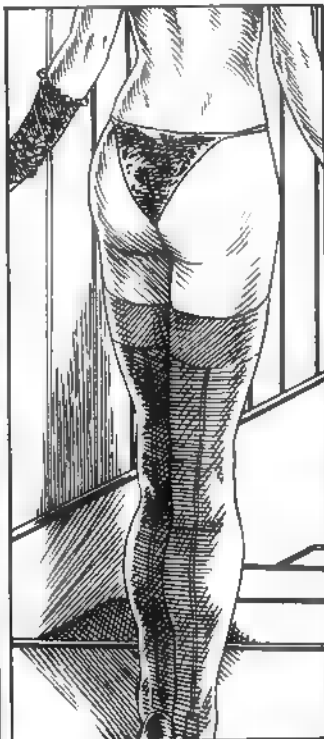




VANESSA WIPES HER MOUTH THEN ASKS FOR FIFTEEN BUCKS... OLD MAN FINNEGAN REALIZES HE'S JUST BLOWN THE LAST OF HIS SOCIAL SECURITY CHECK... JULIO'S JUST SHOT ENOUGH HEROIN INTO HIS VEIN TO MAKE HIM A MORNING STATISTIC... WALLACE LOOKS AT HIS WATCH AND YAWNS. 10:00, SOMEWHERE BURIED ■ A PORN SHOP ON 42ND ST., NEW YORK. NO NEW BLOOD TONIGHT... YET.

TOKENS





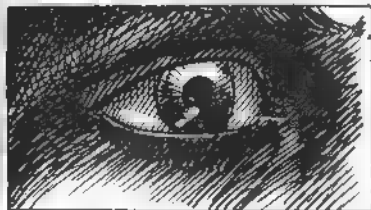
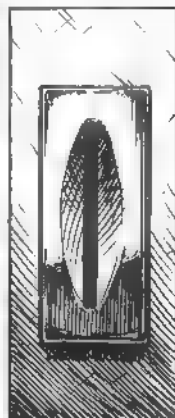
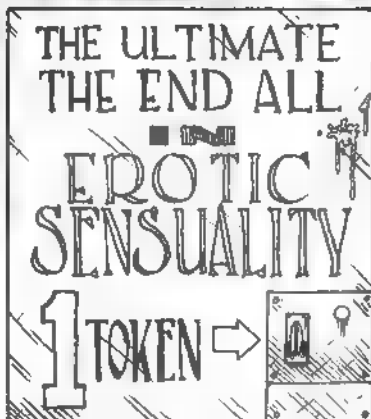
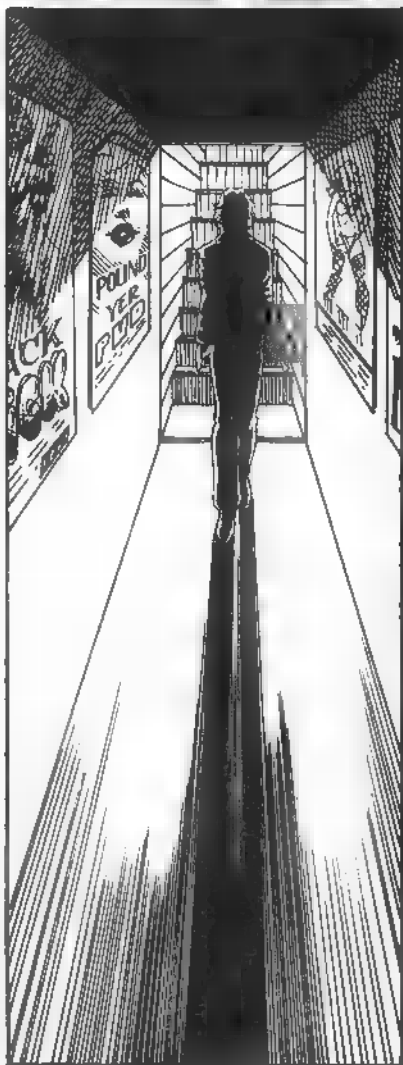
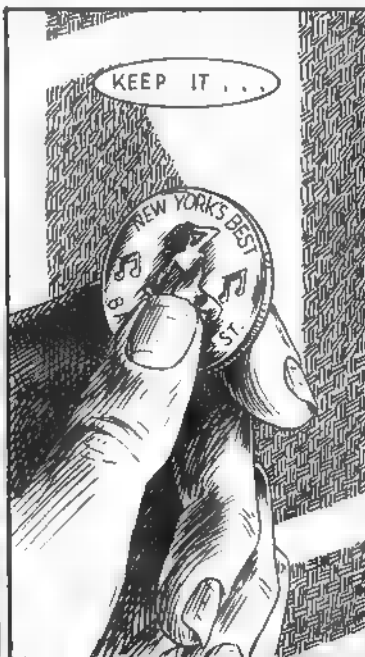
HE WAS FEELING LESS ANXIOUS NOW...
HAD IT BEEN THAT OBVIOUS AT
THE DESK?
DID THE GUY AT THE DESK KNOW IT WAS
HIS FIRST TIME INTO THE CITY ALONE
MUCH LESS A PORN SHOP?

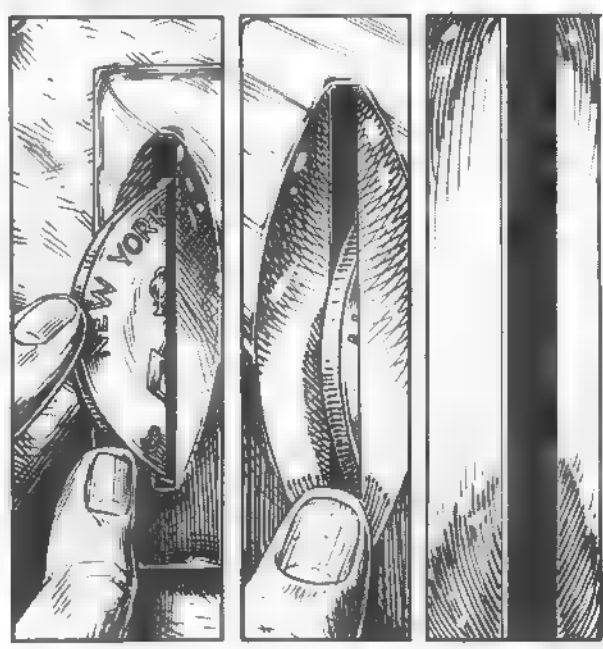
THE FOUR TOKENS WERE GETTING
SWEATY IN HIS HAND — LOOKING
AT THEM URGED HIM TO CONTINUE.

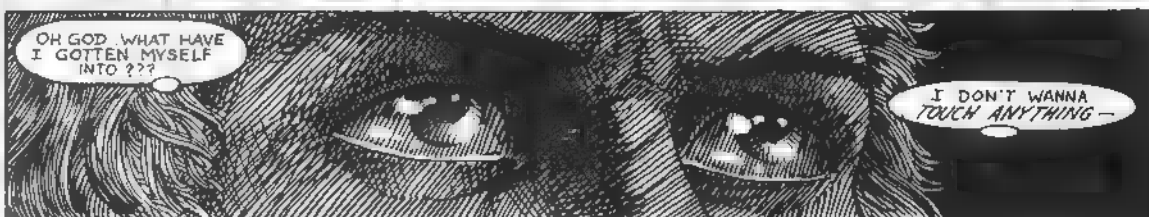


HE'D GOTTEN THIS
FAR WITHOUT
BEING THROWN
OUT ... WELL ...

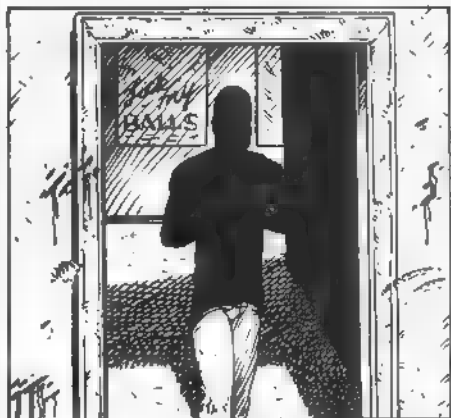




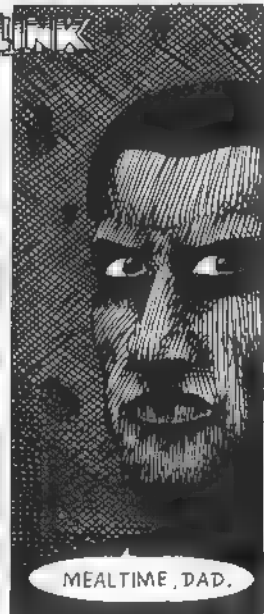








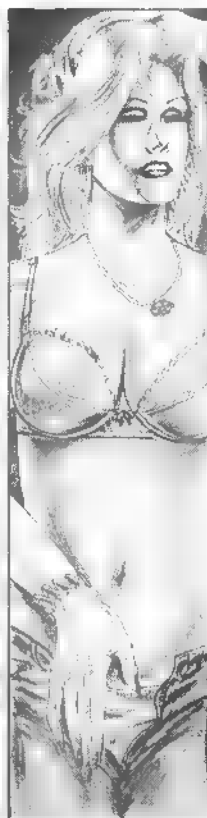
IT WAS 11:40 WHEN WALLACE LET SPENCE REPLACE HIM UPSTAIRS. SPENCE WAS ALWAYS LATE BUT TONIGHT THE 10 MINUTES HAD SEEMED LIKE 10 HOURS. HE HOPED IT HADN'T BEEN A BAD ONE.





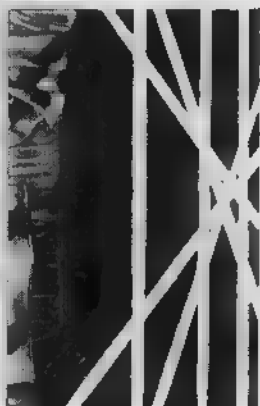


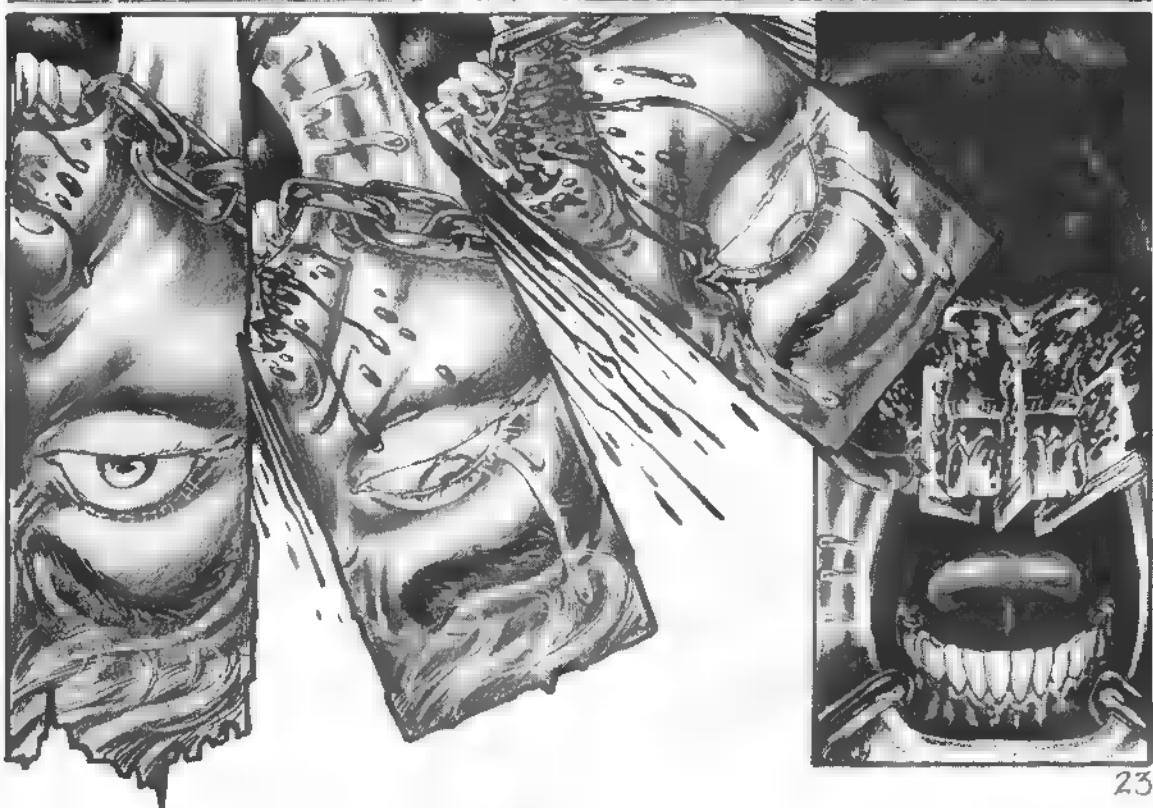
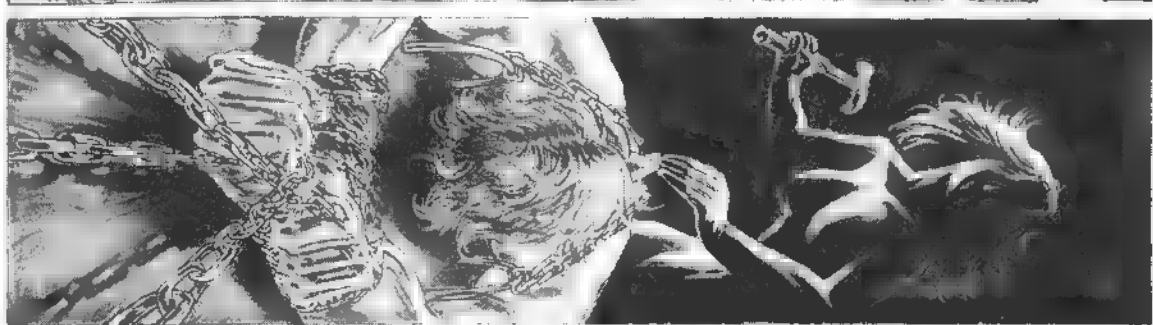
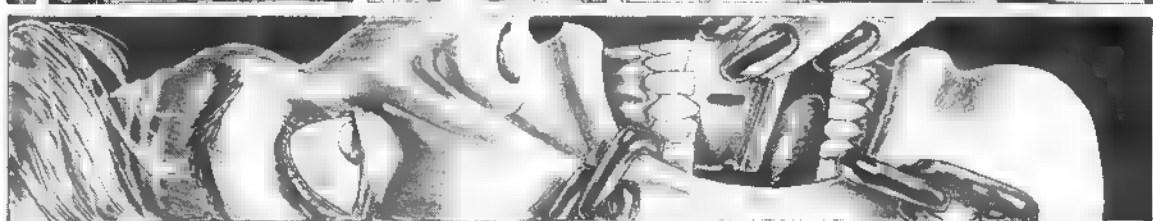
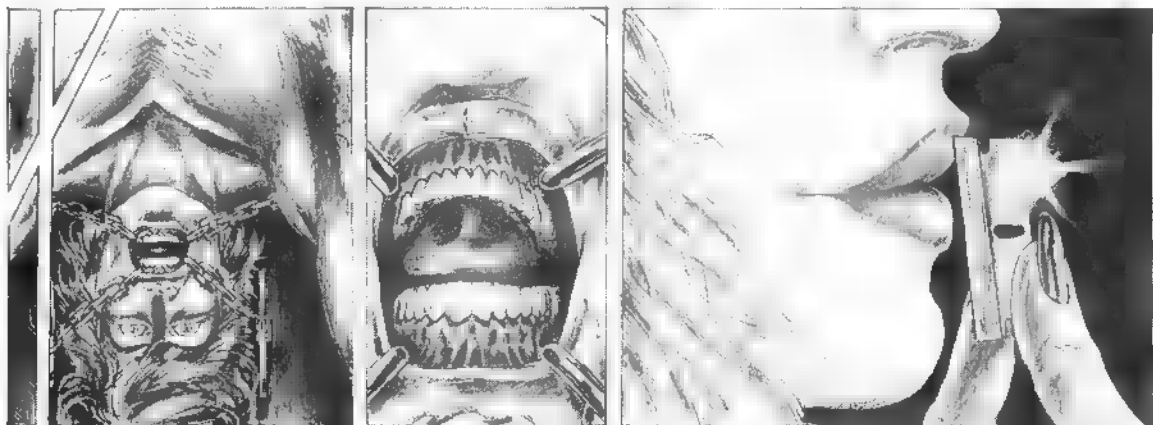
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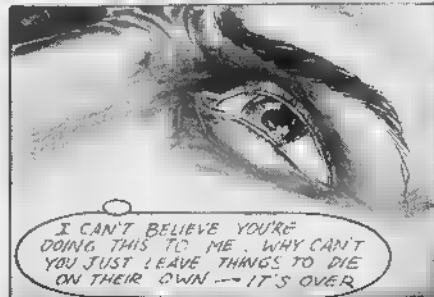
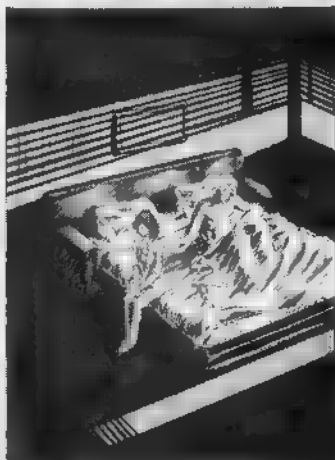
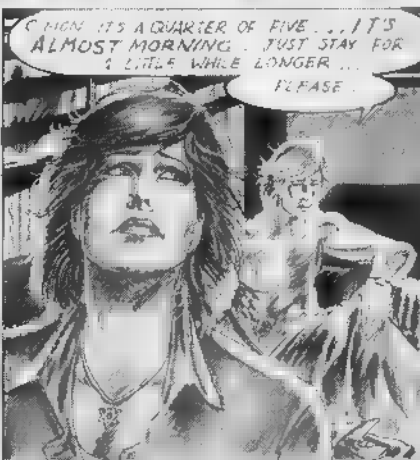


"BRING ME A DREAM..."











CYNTHIA!

TALK TO ME!

WHAT HAPPENED?



YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, DAVID.

NO! NO I DON'T! TELL ME!

YOU TRIED TO CHANGE ME...



YOU WOULDN'T TAKE ME AS I AM.



YOU NEVER LOVED ME, DAVID.



NO! WAIT! OF COURSE I LOVED YOU!! IT'S JUST THAT-- I WASN'T TRYING TO CHANGE YOU, JUST TO HELP YOU.



CYNTHIA... YOU PUT TOO MUCH FAITH IN THAT GODDAMNED WITCHCRAFT! IT'S LIKE -- SHIT -- DO YOU KNOW WHAT DID IT?

DO YOU REMEMBER, LAST MAY, I WAS OVER YOUR HOUSE, THAT STUPID FRIEND OF YOURS, LAURA, CALLED AND SAID THAT SHE WAS TRYING TO KILL HERSELF... WELL, YOU THOUGHT THAT I SLEPT THROUGH ALL OF THIS, BUT I HEARD YOU SAY THAT YOU WOULD HELP HER...

- HELD HER. YOU THEN PULLED OUT A CANDLE AND CUT YOURSELF WITH A RAZOR, SPOTTED YOUR BLOOD ALL OVER THAT FUCKING THING... SAID SOMETHING STUPID AND JUST SAT THERE AND STARED INTO IT.

THAT DID IT.



AFTER THAT NIGHT -

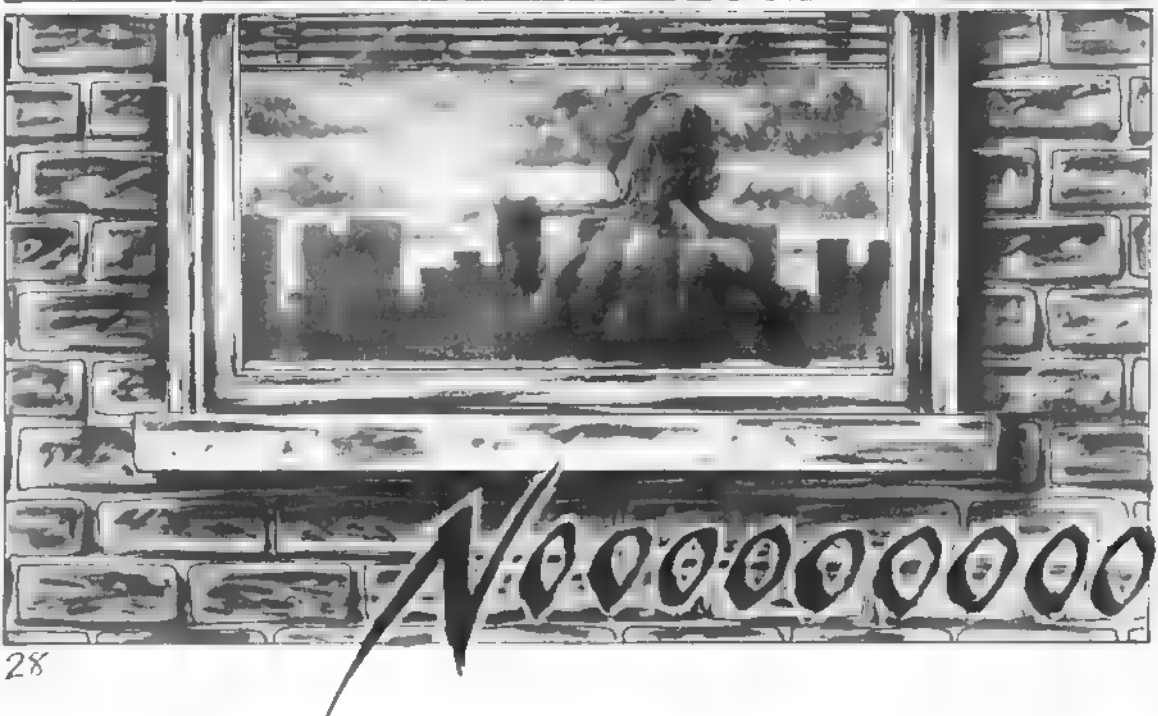
I TRIED TO BRING YOU OUT OF THAT BIZARRE FRAME OF REALITY... BUT YOU WERE TOO FAR.



... DAVID...

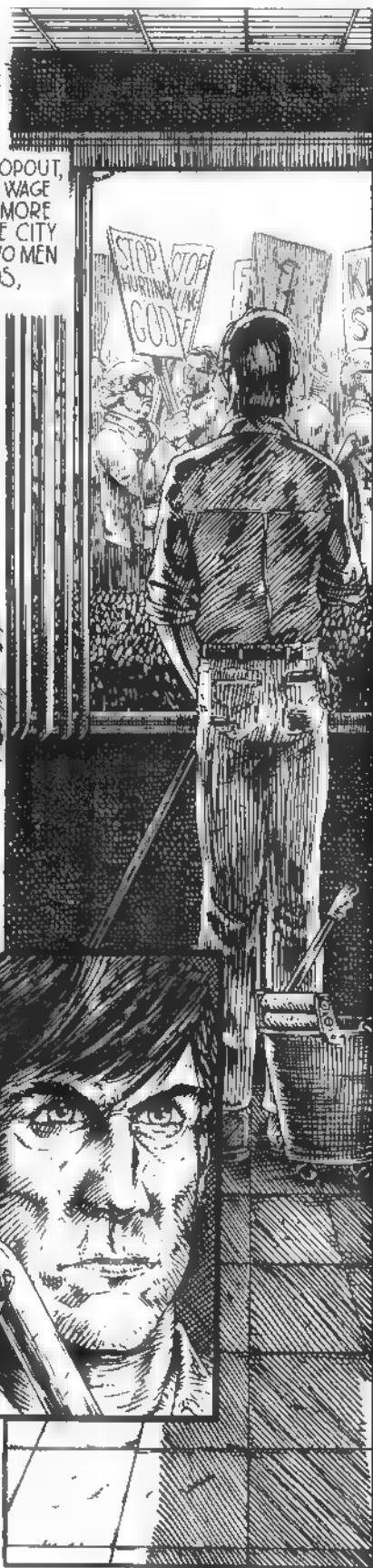






SUPREME COURT JUSTICE GAVIN M'LINTON-RICH, CONSERVATIVE NORTH CAROLINA NATIVE AND HEIR TO THE M'LINTON FAST-FOOD FORTUNE. SUDDENLY THE MAN ON THE SPOT AS THE SWING VOTE IN A CASE THE ENTIRE UNITED STATES IS WATCHING.

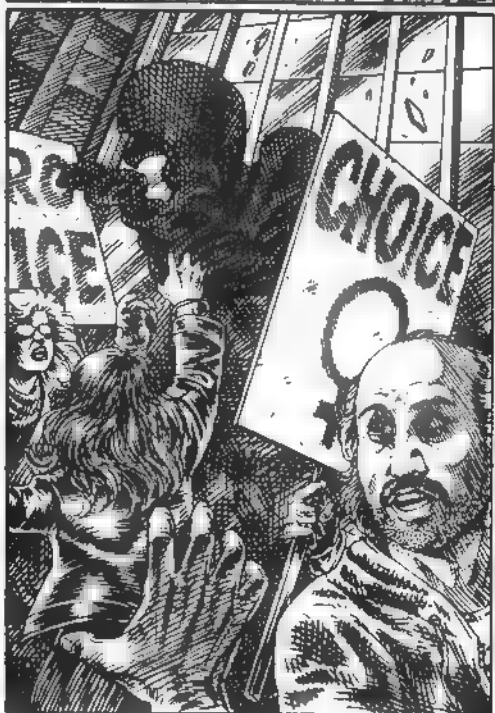
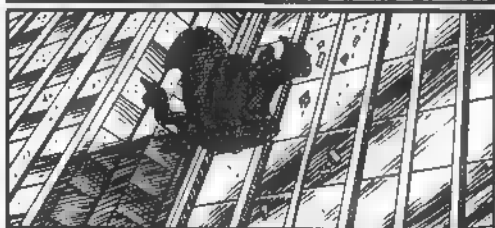
GARY JENKINS - HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT, I.Q. OF 98 - SURVIVING ON MINIMUM WAGE AT THE FIRST JOB HE'S KEPT FOR MORE THAN A YEAR, IN AN APARTMENT THE CITY HAS NEGLECTED TO CONDEMN. TWO MEN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS, ENTIRELY DIFFERENT LIVES ...

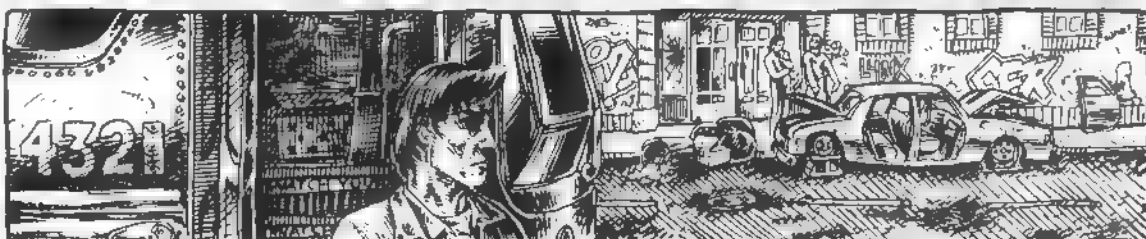
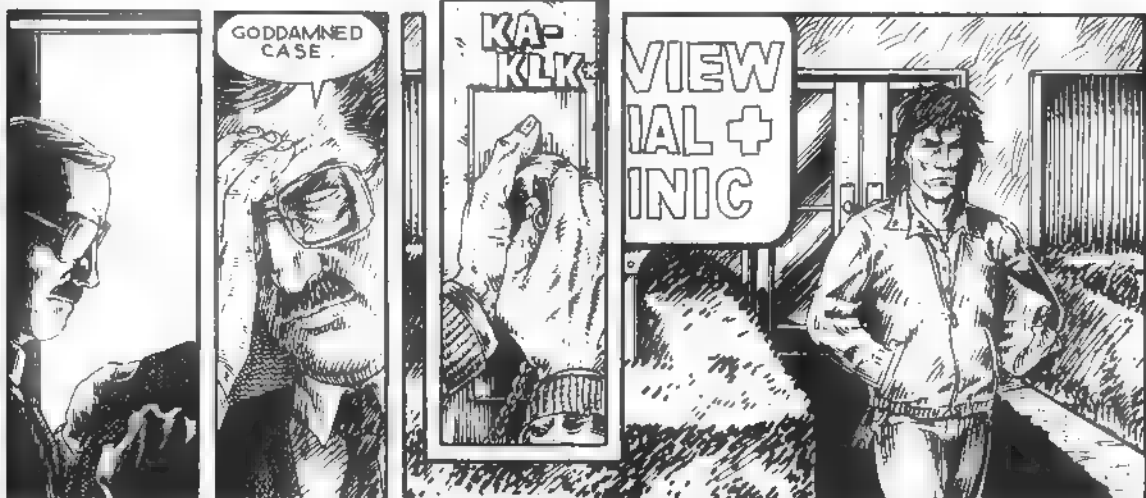


THEY'VE NEVER MET, AND WHO WOULD EVER HAVE SUSPECTED THAT ONE DAY THEY'D BE TOGETHER SHARING A

Kids
Meal









PROTESTERS GATHERED AGAIN TODAY ON THE STEPS OF THE SUPREME COURT BUILDING AS THE COURT ENTERS ITS EIGHTH DAY OF DELIBERATIONS ON THE LATEST CHALLENGE OF THE 1973 ROE VS. WADE RULING.

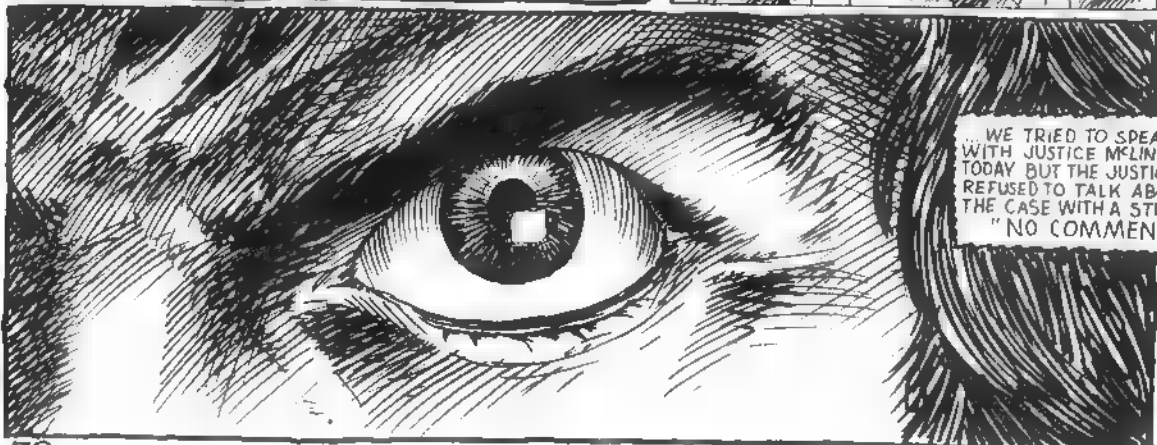


AGAIN, THE CENTER OF THE PROTESTORS ATTENTIONS IS 46 YEAR OLD JUSTICE GAVIN MCLINTON, THE SWING VOTE IN THE NINE JUDGE PANEL.

AS YOU MAY RECALL, JUSTICE MCLINTON WAS APPOINTED TEN MONTHS AGO TO FILL THE SEAT VACATED WHEN...



...DIED OF A HEART ATTACK. MCLINTON, THE NORTH CAROLINA REPUBLICAN CONSERVATIVE, HAS IN THE PAST EXPRESSED HIS PERSONAL VIEWS AGAINST ABORTION, AND THE USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS FOR ...



WE TRIED TO SPEAK WITH JUSTICE MCLINTON TODAY BUT THE JUSTICE REFUSED TO TALK ABOUT THE CASE WITH A STERN "NO COMMENT."



LOOK AT ME, DAMMIT, THIS IS HOW I HAVE TO LIVE!
THIS IS WHAT I AM — 82 DOLLARS A WEEK TO SWEEP AN' MOP
THAT SHITHOLE CLINIC AND I CAN'T AFFORD TO LIVE LIKE A FUCKING
HUMAN BEING! IT AIN'T MY FAULT! THIS IS ALL I GOT AN' YOU WANNA
TAKE IT AWAY — YOU AN' THOSE BASTARDS WHO WANNA MAKE
DECISIONS FOR EVERYBODY INSTEAD OF JUST THEMSELVES — YOU AN'
THOSE FREAKS WHO WANNA PUT THEIR THOUGHTS AND THEIR RULES
AND THEIR FUCKING
RELIGIONS ON THE
REST OF US!!

FUCK THEM!
FUCK
THEM!





OH GOD,
CHOKES
WHY ME...?
I NEVER...I--
I NEVER--

QUIT WHININ' YOU
SONOFA BITCH... YOU DONE
WITH THAT? GOOD
THAT, THAT WAS ONLY MY
ENTRÉE.



THIS...
THIS IS MY
SPECIAL
COURSE

DOC
NEVER
HAD TO
TOUCH
THIS
ONE



SPONTANEOUS
ABORTION



CLEAN THAT
SHIT UP OFF
FLOOR, THEY SAID,
BEFORE ANYBODY
NOTICES..

WASN'T TEN FEET
THROUGH THE DOOR WHEN
IT DROPPED - RIGHT IN
FRONT OF THE DESK ...
AND YOU KNOW WHAT
THEY TELL ME —



THOSE
FUCKS.

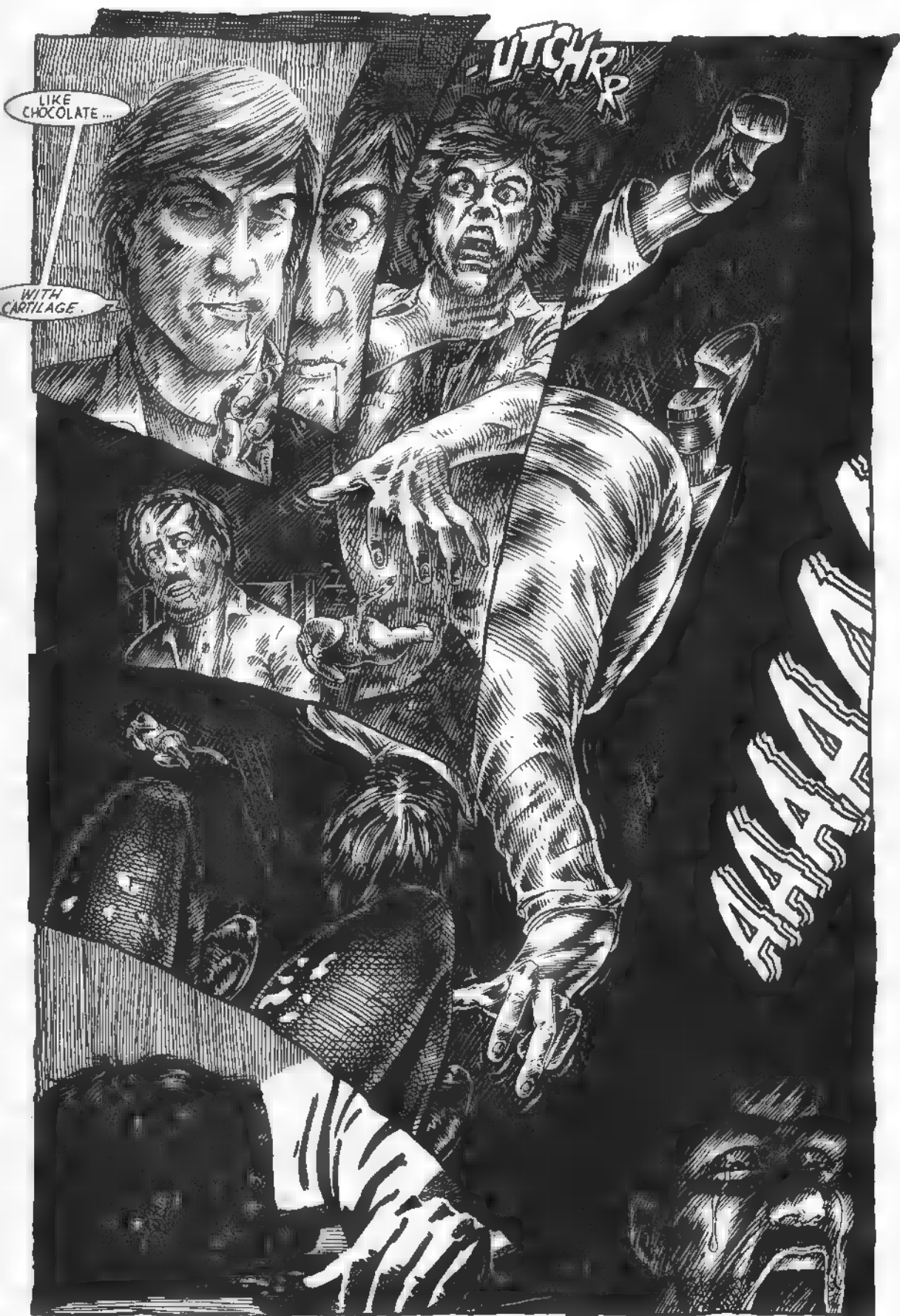


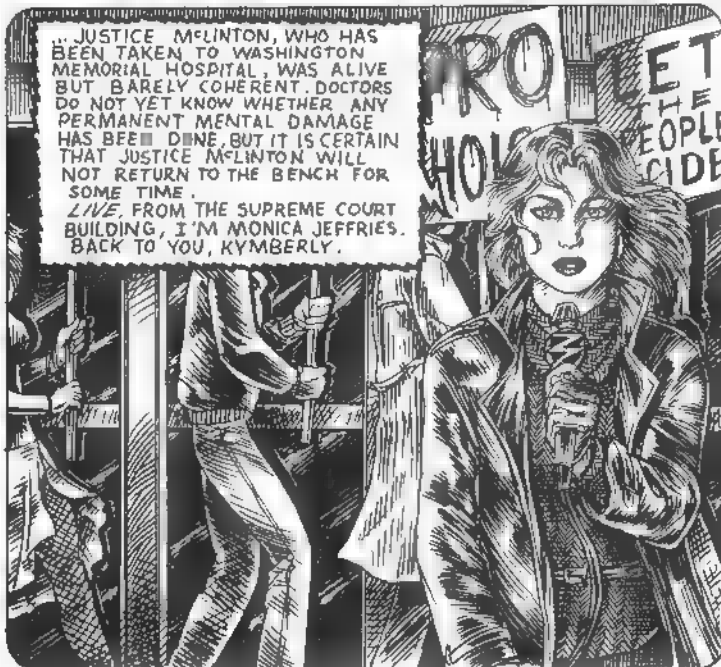
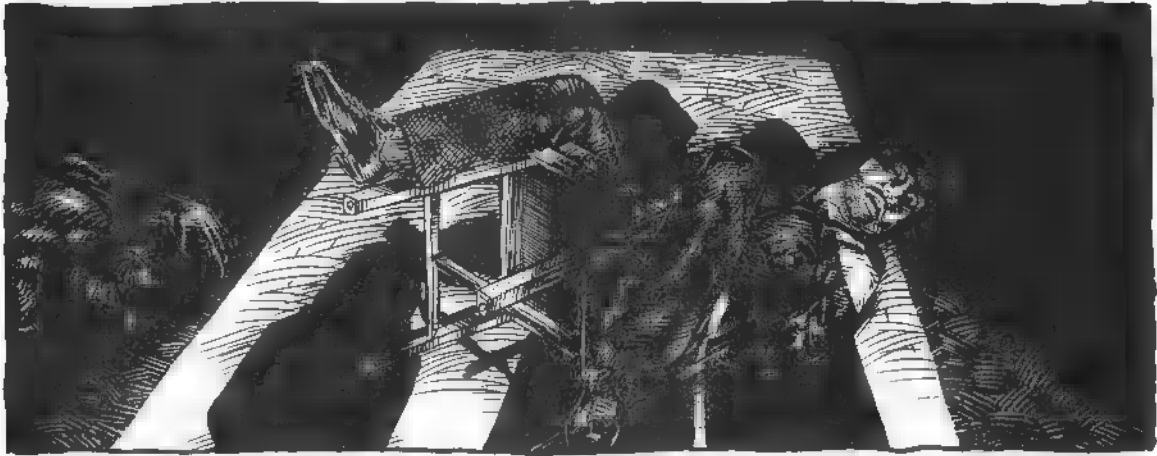
BUT YOU,
JUSTICE...



YOU AN' ME
ARE GONNA
GET TO
SHARE IT

JUST LIKE
ONE OF THEM
BIG CHOCOLATE
EASTER BUNNIES.





OFF THE TOP O' MY HEAD

There's a scene in Gordon Douglas' 1954 film **THEM** where a little girl, catatonic and clutching a doll with a broken head, is brought back to reality when some ammonia fumes ~~are~~ wafted up into her nose. Her reaction is quick and simple, she begins to scream. Why?

Because she had to think.

It ~~seems~~ that all too often we're content to relegate the feelings of horror to the knee-jerk reaction; the cat that leaps through an open window to instill a false sense of calm just before the knife wielding maniac enters upon the unwitting victim... "Cut, that's a wrap, the kids'll love it."

But there's more. You've seen our maniac, our monster in the closet [or basement], our night terrors and our dark man on the street, hiding his own terrible secret. And, hopefully, you wonder, "What if... Could that have really... and hey, I once knew a guy who..."

And you think.

Horror, terror, true fear, there's things about it that cut you to the quick both physically and mentally, because, somewhere, deep inside, you're contemplating that all important "What if?"

In William Friedkin's 1973 film **The Exorcist**, Friedkin shows Father Karras thinking, not just about 12 year old Regan, who may or may not be possessed by the devil, but about his obligations to his ill mother, living alone in a deteriorated neighborhood, about his own faith, about humanity as symbolized by a subway beggar crying out for help.

Jason Miller, portraying the troubled priest, fears, and thinks. His actions are intertwined with his emotions. When Karras is facing the devil in Regan McNeil, the demon challenges Karras not only in physical appearance [via Dick Smith's magical bodily contortions] but also challenges Karras in mind, where the true horror takes grip on the frazzled priest.

But fear cannot exist in the mind only. While both Joe and myself would each deride the tendency to

simply exploit violence and gore, we're all too aware of both the power, and necessity, of both. At a New York comic convention this past year, artist Gene Colan was a member of a panel discussion on the state of horror in comic books today. Gene was none too pleased with the increasing tendency to "show it all", to exhibit the extremes. The term visual splatterpunk was bantered about. Gene suggested that the 1951 film version of **The Thing** starring James Arness was a perfect example of the way things should be, using shadows and creepy music to instill fear.

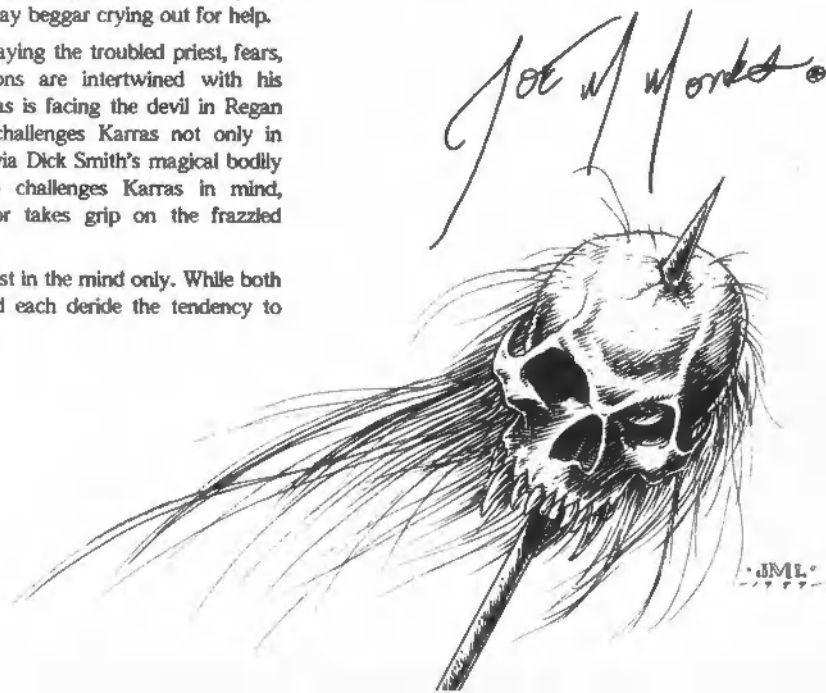
Joe and I don't buy it. Sometimes, when it's necessary, a look into the face of fear goes where no shadow is able. John Carpenter proved that in his remake of **The Thing**. James Arness seems pretty tame in 1989, as do the wolfman and the mummy, but as Karloff and Lugosi have become tame, by the same token Jason, Freddy and Michael Myers have become lame, nothing more than one dimensional serial killers.

Somewhere in between, there's a true face of fear, grinning, waiting to pop up and stare us down, if only we say, "What if?"

What you've got in your hands is the product of a helluva long time time in planing and execution. Some two years ago, sipping iced tea over my typewriter with the other Joe, we learned just what it took to produce a comic book [not too much cash-just a lot of guts and work]... So we said, What if?

Now, you're holding our "What ifs?" Best that we can hope for is that we've succeeded in fingling a few spines, pricked the hair on some necks, and made a well-lit room seem somewhat darker, the shadows a bit longer. And finally, we leave you, with one last thought.

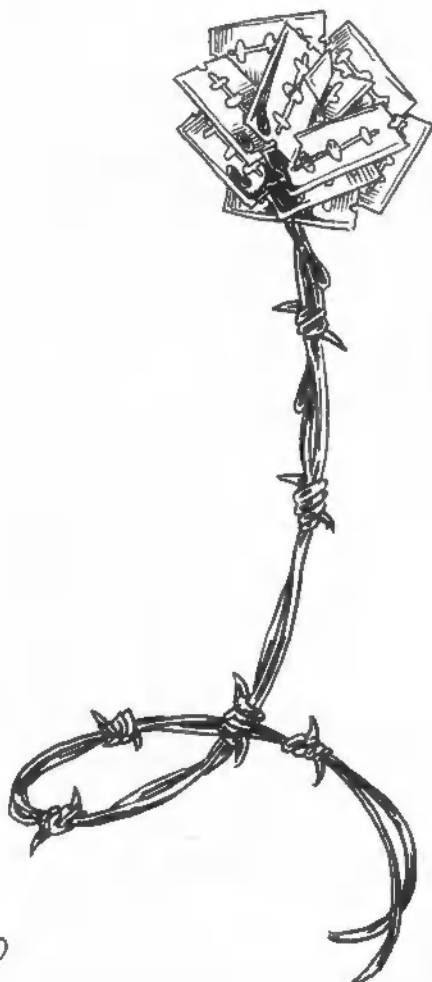
Wait 'til next time.



WHAT SCARES ME

BY
LITTLE
JOEY
LINSNER

AGE 20



What Scares Me? Bingo, right off the bat we've got the old vagina dentata (I think all males fear this one), a whole bunch of the other stuff contained herein; the guy in the closet, the teeth and the razor blades bit (which was an actual dream I had well over a year before **Hellraiser** even came out, so there). Axes. Chainsaws. That six fingered hand that opened up **Chiller Theatre**. Ice cubes (or tinfoil) on my front teeth. Blah,blah,blah...and so on--

Well, ~~these~~ things are nasty, but not truly nerve-shattering. When thinking about these things I always know in the back of my head that they're simply exaggerations; that the odds of facing these things in my day to day life are pretty slim. Knowing that defeats them.

But...what *really* makes me tighten up my shoulder blades, turn my knees inward and bite hard upon my bottom lip?

Ignorance --or I should say, lack of vision. People who let their prejudices overcome their reason. Stupid things build up everyday and I can't believe half of it goes as far as it does.

Things like that silly woman who made a big fuss over **Married With Children** instead of just changing the channel on her idiot box. People like Tipper Gore and Jimmy Swaggart (who had **Playboys** lifted from 7-11's, then got caught paying a prostitute to let him masturbate in front of her), and the idiots who sent, and still send, their money to him.

The concept that abortion might actually get outlawed again scares the hell out of me. "What about the baby, doesn't the baby have any rights?" Doesn't ~~the~~ mother have any? Shouldn't she have the right to make up her mind for herself? This & America, right?

In the '60's, comedian Lenny Bruce got nailed (crucified) for using naughty words to prove a point. Some very narrow-minded people saw only a few words taken out of context, and passed judgment over him. And now, at the end of the 1980's, the same thing is going on with Guns 'n' Roses (though not to the same extent -- good thing) with their song "One In A Million". Once again, people who refuse to step back and take a look at the whole picture.

I think what truly scares me the most is the realization that the one-eyed beast known as *censorship* knows no bounds --to it, nothing is sacred. A few weeks ago, I caught the Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck cartoon in which Daffy utters the famous line, "Shoot me now," and, much to my horror and dismay, they had edited out the footage of him getting shot. How stupid do they think today's youth is? Do they really expect thousands of kids to all run out and blow each other's heads off? Those cases that you do get deal with kids who are already touched to begin with.

Too many people out there have ~~no~~ imagination. What scares me is that these people want to run the world.

And they wonder why my work is riddled with angst...

Joseph M. Linsner
- 1989 -

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For information regarding submissions, or if you'd just like to write, address all correspondence to: **CRY FOR DAWN Productions, 21 Jasper St., Valley Stream, N.Y. 11580**. We'll read it all, honest & truly, even the criticisms.

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